

In the first six months of 2012, Vermonters with Medicare saved nearly \$1.5 million on their prescription drug costs, Vermont's congressional delegation – Sen. Patrick Leahy, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch – announced today. The savings come from reforms enacted through the Affordable Care Act.

New totals released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services focus on Medicare enrollees hit by the prescription drug coverage gap known as the "donut hole." On average, 2,047 Vermonters affected by the coverage gap saved \$692 on the cost of their prescription drugs in the first six months of 2012.

In a joint statement, Leahy, Sanders and Welch said, "This is good news for Vermont seniors and individuals with disabilities who too often have to make tough decisions when it comes to paying their bills or taking their medications, especially in a tough economy. There is much more to be done but this is a positive step in the right direction."

The health care reforms mean a 50 percent discount on covered brand-name prescription drugs and a 14 percent discount on generic medications for people who reached the coverage limit. The generic discount doubled from seven percent in 2011 to 14 percent in 2012.

By 2021, when the donut hole is closed, Medicare beneficiaries will have saved an average of nearly \$4,200 between 2011 and 2021, and those with high prescription costs could save as much as \$16,000 in that same period.